

Contributions

MOSES, THE EMANCIPATOR

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For eighty years Moses had been in training; forty in Egypt and forty in the land of Midian. That must have seemed long, a soul like that of Moses,—a soul burning with an intense desire to liberate his oppressed kinsmen,—a soul like that of a race horse chafing against the reign held by the restraining hand of the driver. But, "All things come to him who waits," the poet has truly said. And with these long years had come to Moses a training and experience which made him fit for the next step.

THE CALL OF MOSES

With no heraldry of trumpets do the crisis hours of men's destinies and of humanity's history approach. Moses was engaged in his usual duties of shepherding his sheep on the steep slopes of Sinai, when the hour of his destiny struck. Long had he pondered on life and duty and God. Now the questions were all to be answered in a moment. He saw one of the common acacia bushes burning on the mountain side. His attention was finally called to it specially, because it continued to burn and was not consumed. It was "a great sight." He approached. Then a voice out of the burning bush halted his curious steps. It thundered out, "Take the shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." He obeyed that awful voice. Never before had he heard it. Then the voice explained that he who spoke was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For over four hundred years that voice had been silent. Now God spoke. Tho he had been silent, he had not been insensible that his chosen people were suffering. Then he gave to Moses the call to go to Egypt and liberate this afflicted people,—not, however, in his own strength, but in the strength of Jehovah. Forty years ago Moses had jumped at the chance to liberate his people and in his haste and violence had exiled himself. But long ago he had learned that that was not God's method. Now his self-confidence was all gone. Now the task was seen in its real proportions and before it his soul shrank back. But when God calls disobedience and unbelief is sin. Moses plead his lack of eloquence, his lack of standing with Pharaoh. "Who am I?" He was a refugee from justice. God then revealed unto Moses his covenant name, Jehovah. So obstinate was Moses, however, that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." Let no man falter when God calls. For the man whom God calls is always able, else God would not call him. The man whom God honors with a message and a work is doomed if he disobey. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," is felt by every such soul. God will provide the means and open the way. "His grace is sufficient." "And Moses Went." It meant suffering for him, but only by suffering is this old world

made better. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," is a principle of world-wide and eternal application.

THE PREPARATION OF THE ISRAELITES

But God never prepares a leader without also preparing a people to be led. Forty years before the bondage was not severe enough to cause the people to desire to quit Egypt. For the Hebrew whom Moses rebuked turned against him and forced him to flee. But forty years of increasing rigor had caused the people to cry unto God for deliverance from such servitude. And as so often the deliverance came in a way so unexpected and even so undesired, that the people almost rebelled. Then, as now, people desired to be saved in their own way and only so far.

Suffering is a great unifier. The affliction of these Hebrews drove them to mutual care. It compelled them to think the same thoughts, to become disgusted with the Egyptians and their religion. It united them so that their cry to heaven was a united cry. And when that is so, God hears. Suffering in a common cause bound them together in a common hope. And suffering made them willing to face almost anything rather than stay in the fertile but terrible land of Egypt.

Suffering drove the church from Jerusalem and made them a missionary church.

Suffering planted the Pilgrims on New England.

Suffering is often God's method of driving his unwilling and ease-loving people to a needed but shunned duty.

THE PREPARATION OF EGYPT

If God was preparing Israel to be lead out of Egypt, he also prepared Egypt to send them forth. We cannot read the account of the Ten Plagues without seeing God's hand in them. And while each was a stroke at the idolatry of Egypt, and thus fastened the hope of the Hebrews more closely to Jehovah, they also served to undermine the faith of the Egyptians in their gods and thus to put to shame, and to force them to let these profitable Hebrew slaves depart. And that was the result. When nine of these plagues had passed dishonoring the sacred Nile, turning the sacred frog into a polluting nuisance, turning the very dust of their sacred land into lice, multiplying their sacred beetle until it became a curse, touching with decaying death their sacred cattle, as well as touching one great source of their wealth, smiting the sacred persons of their people, especially of their priests, with defiling boils, sending terrible hail upon their land, their cattle and themselves who were supposed to be protected from such visitations by special divinities, bringing such showers of locusts upon their fertile land as proved that their gods, whose special work was to avert such calamities, were of no avail, and bringing their great god, the sun to hide his face in a darkness, "that could be felt,"—when all these had passed bringing only promises that

were immediately broken by Pharaoh, Jehovah let fall the tenth and last. So terrible was this that Jehovah was exalted in Egypt and Israel was sent out of the land at once. In every Egyptian house from the palace to the humblest hovel the first born died at midnight. An awful cry of anguish went up from the smitten nation. The heir to the throne lay dead in the palace. And that night with the cry of death arising all over the land except in Goshen, protected by the blood of the passover, Israel passed out on the long journey, which with all its trials and difficulties, with its staggering faith was to end in the Promised Land, liberty and nationality.

Hitherto Pharaoh had been able to explain the plagues either on natural grounds or refer them to gods which they knew. But under this last terrible "stroke," his infidel explanations were without avail. Evidently a god was on the side of the Hebrews mightier than their greatest god whose representative was the king and the prince. And Pharaoh has his modern antitype. God's visitations to-day which should humble us and lead us in the paths of righteousness are often explained by reference too for other causes. But let us who read this history never forget that God's providences are over his people, that there is a god who rules even nature and makes it subserve his will, and that nothing comes by chance. In God's world there are no accidents. Law, the will of the Lord, rules the universe.

THE MARCH TO SINAI

Thus in the darkness of that passover night began a fateful march, beside which that of Zenophon's Ten Thousand is pigmy. There in the midnight darkness of Israel's history began their march which has not yet ended; but which is darkened by seasons of blindness and loss thru unbelief in God, and which is lighted with such great world characters as Moses, Paul and Jesus. There is a history marked by struggles herculean and shot thru with a glory which shall never die. That march to Sinai,—yea even to Canaan,—is typical of their subsequent history, now bright with promise and prayer, now dark with unbelief and apostacy. But this race born with such travail pains, nursed and cultured with such solicitude, and enduring even yet, tho scattered and torn, without a home or a nation, yet bound together as they are, Jews forever, shall not perish until a remnant shall see the truth and the Truth shall make them forever free.

And Moses was the leader of this nascent nation. And Moses is even yet the leader of this scattered but spiritually united people. Moses it was, who with labors unspeakable, with a vision as wide as the world and a devotion almost divine, led this people to the border of the Promised Land, bore their murmurings, endured their taunts and curses, stood between them and an indignant God and laid down his life to make them the people of God,—type of that greater Moses, Jesus Christ, who with sorrows un-